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## Near East and South Asia Review

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Supplement  
18 January 1985

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**Near East and  
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*Page***Articles****Iran-Iraq: Prisoners of War and Refugees**

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Manipulation of the prisoner of war and refugee issues by Tehran and Baghdad is becoming an increasingly contentious problem and will complicate attempts to negotiate a settlement once the Iran-Iraq war ends.

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**Iraq-Iran-Turkey: Syrian Support for a Kurdish Front**

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With Syrian backing, Iraqi Kurdish opposition figures have formed a new coalition against Iraqi President Saddam Husayn, but, if the front is to succeed, Iran must also lend support, and Turkey is pressing Iran to kill the project.

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**Shaykh Shaban—Lebanon's Radical Sunni Cleric**

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Shaykh Said Shaban, a Sunni fundamentalist and head of the Islamic Unification Movement, has consolidated his control of Tripoli and transformed it into an Islamic city, and, as a vocal proponent of Sunni-Shia cooperation dedicated to the Islamization of all of Lebanon, he is an attractive ally for Lebanese Shia fundamentalist leaders.

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**Afghanistan in December**

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Signs of the Afghan insurgency's vitality five years after the Soviet invasion were abundant in December, while the sacking of Defense Minister Qader testified to the Soviet's dissatisfaction with the incompetence and infighting in the Afghan military.

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*Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views. Comments may be directed to the authors.*

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## Articles

**Iran-Iraq: Prisoners of War  
and Refugees**

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Manipulation of the prisoner of war and refugee issues by Tehran and Baghdad is becoming an increasingly contentious problem and will complicate attempts to negotiate a settlement once the Iran-Iraq war ends. Iran regards Iraqi prisoners of war as potential recruits for the Islamic regime it hopes to establish in Iraq. Tehran's efforts to convince its Iraqi prisoners to support Iran and Islamic fundamentalism have resulted in riots and prisoner deaths. International criticism is forcing Iran to improve its image, but Tehran will continue to indoctrinate its Iraqi prisoners. Iraq has made little effort to proselytize its Iranian prisoners of war but has exploited the POW issue to support its war effort. Iraq has also enticed some Iranian prisoners to resettle in Iraq.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) brought the POW issue to international attention by publicly criticizing Iran in November for its treatment of Iraqi prisoners of war. The ICRC said that all 50,000 Iraqi prisoners of war were under a "grave threat" to their physical and mental survival. The Red Cross decided to publicize its concern following a riot in October at a POW camp near Gorgan, in north-central Iran, that was witnessed by ICRC representatives and in which six Iraqi prisoners were killed and 35 wounded, most by Iranian guards.

**Iran: Trying To Convert Iraqi Prisoners of War**

Iran has made an intensive effort to convince its Iraqi prisoners to support Iran and embrace Iran's brand of Islamic fundamentalism. We estimate that approximately 40,000 of the roughly 50,000 Iraqi prisoners of war in Iran were captured during the first two years of the war and therefore have been

subjected to over two years of indoctrination. Many prisoners of war are given three indoctrination sessions a day. Last spring Iranian Assembly Speaker Rafsanjani publicly proclaimed that all 50,000 prisoners of war were ready to fight against Iraq, but we estimate that most Iraqi prisoners of war have little interest in Iran's ideology and simply want to go home.

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The Gorgan riot is not the first incident in which Iraqi prisoners of war have been killed by Iranians.

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The Iraqis have published a report claiming that 134 Iraqis have been killed or wounded in four other incidents at Iranian POW camps.

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The riots probably occurred because the Iranians have made little effort to separate the converted from the unconverted. Prisoners who are persuaded to adopt a pro-Khomeini stance probably are used for proselytizing among their fellows and are spying on them.

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On one occasion prisoner violence was directed against the ICRC. The head of a Red Cross delegation visiting a POW camp was badly beaten by prisoners who the ICRC said had been whipped into a fervor by Iranian clerics. Others in the delegation were greeted with showers of stones and accused of being spies for Iraq, [REDACTED]

Iranian attempts at indoctrination probably have provided a major incentive for Iraqi prisoners to try to escape. Iranian press reports indicate one group of Iraqi prisoners attempted to escape when a religious service at a mosque was disrupted by a terrorist bomb attack. Afghanistan and Pakistan have been favorite escape routes for Iraqi prisoners of war. [REDACTED]

inspects Iraqi POW camps. Moreover, the Iranian press reports that foreign military attaches were allowed to inspect the Gorgan Camp Christmas week and notes that religious services were held in all POW camps for Iraqi Christians. [REDACTED]

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#### **Iraq: Making Propaganda**

While Iraq has made little effort to proselytize the 15,000 Iranian prisoners we estimate it holds, Baghdad has exploited the POW issue to support its war effort. Following an Iraqi defeat in December 1981, Baghdad sought to divert public attention from the debacle by claiming that Iran had executed 1,500 Iraqi soldiers taken prisoner during the battle. Although no evidence suggests that the Iranians shot 1,500 Iraqi prisoners, an Iranian Revolutionary Guard told Western diplomats that some prisoners of war were shot during the battle because there were not enough Iranian soldiers to guard them. [REDACTED]

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#### **The Propaganda Battle**

The killing of Iraqi prisoners of war at the Gorgan Camp highlights the conflict between the Iranian regime's determination to spread its brand of Shia Islam and its efforts to reduce its diplomatic isolation. Publicly, Iran responded to the recent ICRC criticism by ordering a halt to Red Cross activities in Iran, challenging the ICRC version of the Gorgan incident, and criticizing the Red Cross for ignoring the fate of 20,000 Iranians that Tehran claims are missing in Iraq. [REDACTED]

Iraq moved on several fronts to propagandize its claim. Iraqi schools closed in mourning, and Arab countries were urged to issue a joint condemnation of the alleged atrocity. The Iraqi press highlighted accusations that the Iraqi prisoners had been mutilated following their execution. Baghdad probably also was trying to frighten Iraqi soldiers, who were surrendering in increasing numbers at that time. [REDACTED]

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Since 1981 Iraqi propaganda has continued to highlight Iranian mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners of war. Baghdad recently has adopted an extraordinary public relations ploy to publicize the latest deaths of Iraqi prisoners in Iran. Iraq took out an ad in Western newspapers announcing an art contest, with an \$8,000 first prize, in which "impressionist" artists are invited to depict the "savage and vicious crimes committed by

To prevent the incident from becoming a major propaganda victory for Iraq, Iran has agreed, after a long delay, to allow a UN delegation to visit Gorgan and other POW camps in Iran this month after it

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the Khomeini regime" against Iraqi prisoners of war. Iraq supposedly plans to exhibit all entries in Baghdad and cities throughout the world. [ ]

Iraq also has tried for propaganda purposes to entice Iranians to flee their country, according to the US Embassy in Baghdad. The Red Cross estimates that Iraq has received about 25,000 Iranian refugees. This number probably accounts for most of the 20,000 people that Iran claims are missing in Iraq. Approximately half of these refugees are Kurds, living in the north, according to the ICRC; the other half are Persians living in the south. Iraq refused the ICRC access to some of these refugees for almost two years and, according to the Red Cross, treated them as "detainees." Red Cross officials contend that Iraq cannot care for many of these refugees and intends to return them to Iraq once they have served their propaganda purpose. The ICRC has asked the United States to admit some of them, according to the US Embassy in Baghdad. [ ]

#### Uninspected Prisoners

Both Iran and Iraq have refused to allow the ICRC access to some prisoners of war, according to Red Cross officials. The ICRC has told US diplomats that Iran is withholding about 5,000 prisoners, mostly high-ranking Iraqi officers and hardcore Ba'thists. The ICRC estimates that Iraq is keeping about 2,000 in secret camps. [ ]

Many of the Iranians held in uninspected Iraqi camps are senior Iranian officers and civilian officials. Baghdad has not allowed the Red Cross to see the ex-Iranian Minister of Petroleum who was captured in Iraq's initial invasion of Iran. The Minister was seriously wounded and may be dead. Iraq also has admitted to ICRC officials that it is withholding some prisoners captured since February 1984 but says this is purely to put pressure on Iran to allow ICRC access to its Iraqi prisoners and to prevent Iranian abuse. [ ]

Each country's fear that the other will gain a propaganda victory out of the POW issue has resulted in only one prisoner exchange. After the exchange of 32 prisoners in July 1983, Iraq sought to improve its image internationally by unilaterally handing over about 180 prisoners of war in January 1984. The Iranian press widely publicized stories from the returning prisoners recounting Iraqi torture and brainwashing efforts, all of which the prisoners were able to resist because of their "faith in Islam." [ ]

#### Outlook

Iran's concern about not giving Iraq a propaganda victory on the POW issue probably will lead Tehran to temper efforts to convert its Iraqi prisoners with safeguards to reduce the chance of riots. Tehran also is likely to allow the ICRC to resume its activities in Iran, but it probably will insist that the organization replace some Red Cross officials in the country believed to be biased against the regime. [ ]

Iran's efforts to win over its Iraqi prisoners will make it more difficult to resolve this issue when the two countries try to negotiate an end to the war. Iraq will be reluctant to accept prisoners of war it believes have succumbed to Iranian indoctrination. [ ]

Agreement on the return of Iranian refugees to Iran also is likely to prove difficult. Iran probably will regard them as traitors, and Iraq will view them as an unwanted burden. Since there are also 40,000 Iraqi refugees in Iran, however—whom Tehran has little desire to integrate into Iranian society—the basis for an exchange exists. [ ]

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**Iraq-Iran-Turkey:  
Syrian Support for  
a Kurdish Front**

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In late October a number of prominent Iraqi Kurdish opposition figures visited Damascus, where they met President Assad and formed a new coalition against Iraq's President Saddam Husayn. The coalition's main task, according to the Syrian press, will be to open a second front in northern Iraq. Damascus will supply the Kurds with arms and financial aid. If the front is to succeed, Iran must also lend support, but we believe that Ankara is pressing Tehran to kill the project.

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**Background**

Iraqi Kurdish guerrillas led by Mas'ud Barzani tried to open a second front in northern Iraq in 1983. Barzani's guerrillas took part in the Iranian attack at Haj Umran and later carved out secure bases along the Turkish border, where they harassed Iraqi army units. The guerrillas hoped ultimately to exhaust the Iraqi units and demoralize them.

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Iraq's President Saddam Husayn thwarted the Kurdish-Iranian strategy by cutting a deal with a rival of Barzani, Jalal Talabani. Saddam offered the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—the second-largest Iraqi Kurdish rebel group—economic concessions for Iraq's 2.5 million Kurds and portfolios in his government for Talabani's lieutenants if the rebel leader would help drive Barzani out of the north.

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This past summer Talabani's agreement with Saddam collapsed. Powerful interests in Iraq apparently viewed Talabani as a rival and contrived to sabotage his rapprochement with the government. Now,

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some of Talabani's men are siding with Barzani. At the same time Barzani's guerrillas, many of whom are still entrenched along the Turkish border, have stepped up their activity.

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## Shaykh Shaban—Lebanon's Radical Sunni Cleric [REDACTED]

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*America will be subject to operations in its own country to avenge the people of South Lebanon and Palestine. . . . No one can stand against the Islamic tide. It has begun to knock at the White House door, which is reinforced with concrete obstacles for fear of Islamic attacks.*

*Shaykh Said Shaban  
13 January 1985*

Shaykh Said Shaban, a Sunni fundamentalist and head of the Islamic Unification Movement (IUM) (Tawhid al-Islami), has consolidated his control of Tripoli and transformed it into an Islamic city. Shaban is dedicated to the Islamization of all of Lebanon, and he rejects political accommodation with the Christian-dominated central government. Shaban receives support from Iran and has followed Iranian guidance to coordinate joint operations with Shia activists in Beirut against the Lebanese Government. As an emerging leader of Sunni fundamentalism in Lebanon, the head of the IUM, and a vocal proponent for Sunni-Shia cooperation, Shaban is an attractive ally for Lebanese Shia fundamentalist leaders such as Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Shaykh Muhammad Mehdi Shams-al-Din, and Husayn Musawi. [REDACTED]

We believe Shaban can increase his influence beyond Tripoli, drawing on his support from Iran and ties to Lebanese fundamentalist leaders to press his national goals for Lebanon. These goals include the establishment of an Islamic government in Lebanon and the rejection of "non-Islamic" elements, especially the Phalange Party, the US presence in Lebanon, and the continued Israeli occupation of South Lebanon. [REDACTED]

Shaban's strength in Tripoli and potential for wider influence depend on his maintaining his working arrangement with Syria, reached through Iranian mediation last September, which allows Shaban to

work for his fundamentalist objectives in the heart of Syrian-controlled northern Lebanon. These objectives conflict with Syrian interests and policies in Lebanon, but Shaban probably will be allowed to continue his activities as long as he does not challenge Syrian forces in Lebanon or the government in Damascus. [REDACTED]

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### Growth of Shaban's Influence: The IUM

The Islamic Unification Movement is an amalgamation formed in the mid-1970s of three Sunni political parties, each committed in varying degrees to the establishment of Islamic government in Lebanon:

- The largest element of the IUM is the Popular Resistance Party (Muqawama al-Sha'biyah), also known as the Committee for Mosques and Communities. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] This group is comparatively moderate, calling for the gradual Islamization of Lebanon's governing institutions with the possibility of sharing political power with other confessional groups.

- The most radical element is the Soldiers of God Party (Jundallah), dedicated to a Muslim monopoly in the government and to the application of the shari'a (Islamic law) in Lebanese civil, judicial, and administrative affairs. The Jundallah militia is nearly as large as that of the Popular Resistance Party. [REDACTED]

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- The smallest element is the Lebanese Arab Movement (Harakat Lubnan al-'Arabi), which, like Jundallah, believes that the only salvation for Lebanon is Islam. [REDACTED]

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The amalgamation of these groups into the IUM occurred in 1982 as a fundamentalist response to continued factional fighting in Tripoli. Increased fundamentalism was also in part a response to the political instability and economic disruption caused by the fighting. [REDACTED]

Shaban's social base was the unemployed workers in Tripoli, whose numbers increased as fighting forced factories and businesses to close and as rural Muslims moved to Tripoli to find jobs. [REDACTED]

As fighting intensified between the pro-Yasir Arafat faction and the pro-Syrian Fatah dissidents of the PLO in 1983, Shaban and the IUM exploited the turmoil to ally with or eliminate rival political factions or militias and challenge the traditional Muslim leadership in Tripoli. Arafat and the PLO supplied funds, weapons, and military assistance to each of the elements of the IUM from the 1970s until the PLO evacuated Tripoli in 1983. [REDACTED]

Shaban and the IUM supported Arafat and Fatah during the fighting against the Syrian-backed PLO rebels in late 1983, an alliance Shaban justified as necessary to defend Tripoli's Muslim community. In exchange for Shaban's support, Arafat gave the IUM light weapons and financial aid during the fighting, and one of Arafat's last acts before evacuating Tripoli in December 1983 was to turn his heavy weapons over to the IUM. We believe that a major motivation for Shaban's alliance with Arafat was to profit from the PLO presence in Tripoli and, later, to inherit Fatah's heavy weapons. [REDACTED]

By late 1984 Shaban had consolidated his control of Tripoli and filled the power vacuum created when Arafat and the Syrian-backed Palestinian forces left. The IUM exercises de facto control of Tripoli port, operates a radio and television station, and publishes a weekly newspaper. Shaban is strong enough to impose conditions on Fatah members returning to Tripoli. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### **Shaban: Personality and Goals**

Shaban is the most important unifying factor in the IUM. A powerful and persuasive orator, Shaban studied Arabic literature at al-Azhar University in Cairo and religion in Iran. Shaban established his reputation as a leading Sunni political activist during the 1970s, when he delivered the Friday sermon at Tripoli's main Sunni mosque. These sermons were regularly rebroadcast to other Sunni communities in Lebanon. Shaban is about 50 years old, and [REDACTED] was brought up a Shia, converting to Sunni Islam around 1970. [REDACTED]

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Shaban's primary goal is a united Muslim leadership and the creation of an Islamic republic in Lebanon, cutting across Sunni-Shia lines. He would eliminate non-Muslim influences in Lebanon, especially the Christian Phalange Party and the present government, the US presence in Lebanon and its support for the central government, and Israeli troops occupying South Lebanon. Shaban also opposes the Syrian presence in Lebanon but probably realizes that he cannot directly confront it. He criticizes Arafat as insufficiently "Islamic," despite their earlier close alliance, and advocates a "unified Islamic position" for solving the Palestinian "crisis." [REDACTED]

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Under Shaban's leadership, the IUM has transformed Tripoli from one of Lebanon's more tolerant and heterogeneous urban centers into Lebanon's most autonomous Islamic city. Shari'a is applied in the city's judicial system, drugs and alcohol have been eliminated, Western dress for women is criticized, and IUM members enforce the fast during Ramadan. [REDACTED]

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### **Links to Other Lebanese Muslim Groups**

Shaban supports the activities of several Lebanese Muslim groups, either to bolster his own Sunni credentials or as an expression of his fundamentalist religious and political beliefs. Shaban's ties to fundamentalist leaders and movements, however, are his most important Lebanese alliance. Shaban is a member of the "inner circle" of Lebanese fundamentalist leaders. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Shaban visited Tehran and expressed support for Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini before launching the IUM in 1982. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We believe that Shaban is acting as a spokesman for Iran and that both share the goal of establishing an Islamic government in Lebanon.

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#### Relations With Syria

Syrian acceptance, or at least tolerance, is essential for Shaban to assert any authority in Syrian-controlled North Lebanon. Shaban has been critical of Syrian influence in Lebanon, and he angered the Syrians by supporting Arafat against the Syrian-backed Palestinian rebels in 1983 and by assisting Syrian members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon. Shaban is also critical of the Alawite sect that dominates the Syrian leadership. Nonetheless, he has supported Syrian authority in North Lebanon through actions that have also reinforced his own authority. For example, Shaban eliminated the Lebanese Communist Party and pro-Iraqi Ba'thist militias in Tripoli in the fall of 1983. [REDACTED]

The most direct confrontation between Shaban and Syria was the fighting between the IUM and the Syrian-supported Arab Cavaliers militia in the summer of 1984. By that time the militia was the last barrier to Shaban's control of Tripoli. The confrontation ended in September 1984 after Iranian mediation. [REDACTED]

#### Ties to Iran

Shaban receives considerable support from Iran for his activities as a fundamentalist leader and advocate of Muslim unity. Press reporting indicates that

[REDACTED]

The coincidence of goals and Shaban's willingness to represent Iranian interests in Lebanon were demonstrated during a visit to political and religious leaders in Beirut last November. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] In his public speeches Shaban minimized Sunni-Shia differences and called for a "united Muslim

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leadership" to establish an Islamic republic. He also threatened to spread the Islamic revolution to the United States. [redacted]

**Prospects**

We believe that Shaban will continue to cooperate with Iranian officials in Tehran, Damascus, and Beirut toward the shared objective of eliminating non-Islamic forces and influences and creating an Islamic government in Lebanon. As one of the inner circle of fundamentalist leaders in Lebanon, Shaban can expect to receive continued Iranian support and encouragement. [redacted]

Shaban will also continue to seek an increased national role, although this role will probably be limited by the plethora of other, more established factions; Shaban's small presence in the central arena of Beirut; and the limitation of Shaban's authority to Tripoli. An increase in Sunni fundamentalism could boost Shaban's audience and influence in Sunni communities in Beirut and along the southern coast. These communities, however, are not as susceptible to fundamentalist influence as the Shia community has been. A growth of support for Shaban among Sunnis might be more indicative of Sunni acceptance of Shaban as a Sunni leader rather than as a fundamentalist. [redacted]

Shaban is temporarily safe from attacks by other factions in Syrian-occupied North Lebanon. Shaban's activities and goals, however, will ultimately collide with Syria's interest in maintaining its influence in Lebanon and its leverage over the Lebanese Government. Shaban and the IUM possess sufficient resources, weapons, and personnel to make an attempt to suppress him by force lead to intense fighting in Tripoli, possibly spreading to involve several, if not all, of North Lebanon's factions. This violence could be triggered by a direct confrontation between Shaban and the Syrian Government, by the spread of Shaban's movement and activities to the Sunni community in Syria, or by a weakening of Iranian support and willingness to intercede on Shaban's behalf in Damascus. [redacted]

[redacted]

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**Afghanistan in December**

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Signs of the Afghan insurgency's vitality five years after the Soviet invasion were abundant in December. For the third time in 1984, a large-scale Soviet and Afghan multibattalion operation was attempting to relieve insurgent pressure in Paktia Province and stem infiltration from Pakistan; the resistance maintained a high level of activity in Ghazni, Qandahar, and Herat Provinces; and harassment of the Soviet and Afghan forces in the Panjsher Valley increased. Meanwhile, the sacking of Defense Minister Qader testified to the Soviets' dissatisfaction with the incompetence and infighting in the Afghan military.

As on the fourth anniversary of the invasion, the Soviets and the Kabul regime illustrated their ability to curtail guerrilla activity in the capital by means of extraordinary security measures. Moreover, the continuing availability of consumer goods and fuel in Kabul indicated that successive Soviet and Afghan assaults on the Panjsher Valley in 1984 have held down insurgent attacks on convoys on the vital highway from Termez to Kabul.

**Paktia Province**

One of the largest Soviet and Afghan multibattalion operations of the war in the border area began in mid-December in Paktia Province, but—like previous large-scale operations in Paktia in February and August—it will probably yield only temporary results and prove costly. about two Soviet regiments and a large Afghan contingent are deployed in the Ali Khel area near the Pakistan border, and the area has been heavily bombed.

The operation—like the earlier ones—probably is designed to relieve insurgent pressure on Ali Khel garrison and to close some of the insurgents'

resupply routes. The insurgents are well armed and close to their support bases in Pakistan, however, and numerous passes allow them to transit the border area almost at will.

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**Ghazni, Qandahar, and Herat**

Although winter weather may have limited combat activity in much of Afghanistan, the insurgents maintained a high level of activity in Ghazni, Qandahar, and Herat Provinces. According to US Embassy sources, insurgents and Soviet forces clashed frequently in the city of Ghazni in December, and security on the main highway through the province deteriorated. The sources claim that, in one attack on a convoy, the insurgents damaged some 70 vehicles. Qandahar, often subjected to Soviet sweeps, remains insecure from the regime's point of view. US Embassy sources report that skirmishes with the resistance and bombing of the surrounding villages are common.

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a large Soviet and Afghan operation was under way in Herat during December, and US Embassy sources said that the insurgents destroyed several armored vehicles in a Soviet convoy near the provincial capital.

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**Kabul Area**

As in 1983, tight security prevented the insurgents from carrying out significant action in Kabul to mark the anniversary of the Soviet invasion on 27 December. The US Embassy reports that increased security measures included thorough searches of vehicles, night use of spotter planes and flares, and shelling of suspected insurgent concentrations. On several nights, nevertheless, guerrillas managed to harass Soviet positions and attack the Defense Ministry with rockets and heavy machineguns, according to US Embassy sources. Soviet pilots, the US Embassy reported, continued to exhibit concern

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over insurgent possession of heat-seeking missiles; the pilots fired flares and used tight spiral flight patterns on takeoffs and landings. [ ]

**Panjsher Valley**

Insurgent pressure, harsh weather, and other problems hampered Soviet and Afghan military operations in the Panjsher Valley area. [ ]

**Outlook**

Increasingly harsh weather probably will keep combat actions at a low level. Besides providing security on the highway between Termez and Kabul, the Soviets' and Afghan regime's most difficult task will be to maintain their Panjsher garrisons in the face of insurgent harassment. [ ]

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[ ] US Embassy sources report that the insurgents have almost uncontested control of the upper valley and the side valleys and continue to strike at convoys on the highway between Termez and Kabul, though not to the extent they did a year ago.

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**Defense Minister's Dismissal**

[ ]  
Afghan Defense Minister Qader was removed for his lack of effectiveness, lack of ideological commitment, and inability to overcome problems of factionalism in the military ranks. Qader was replaced by Nazar Muhammad, a member of the Khalqi faction, which dominates the military. The move may boost morale among some party members in the military, but the Afghan forces' ineffectiveness—rooted in disloyalty, poor training, and manpower shortages—will be difficult to overcome. [ ]

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